

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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**GOV. EASLEY ASKS CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION FOR SUPPORT TO PROTECT
TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS**

RALEIGH - Gov. Mike Easley today sent a letter to the N.C. Congressional delegation asking them to support his request to the President for his trade representatives to withdraw from the current agreement with Vietnam and negotiate fair trade policy in future agreements.

Last Thursday, Easley visited workers at the Pillowtex plant in Kannapolis.

"Many of the Pillowtex workers that I met wore American flags and yellow ribbons in support of our troops," said Easley. "These citizens love their country, make sacrifices for its principles, and trust their elected leaders to fight for their jobs and their communities.

"Unfortunately, our deficient national trade policy fails to honor this trust. It is inexcusable that these hard-working North Carolinians may lose their jobs because of poor negotiating tactics and results, such as the recent agreement with Vietnam.

"North Carolina's excellent business climate and our highly-skilled workers can allow us to transition our economy successfully," said Easley. "But we must have relief from misdirected national trade policy that undercuts an entire industry in the midst of the current economic downturn."

On May 8, Gov. Mike Easley sent a letter to President George W. Bush urging him to protect North Carolina's textile industry in international trade negotiations. He requested that the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) withdraw its current agreement with Vietnam, reinstate import protections based on previous negotiations and conduct a comprehensive review of all quota categories to determine legitimate levels of Vietnamese trade. To date, there has been no evidence of any such commitment to the long-term viability of domestic textile industry from the President or his trade representatives.

Since 2001, more than 50,000 jobs in North Carolina's traditional textile, apparel and furniture industries have disappeared. Foreign competition is responsible for many of these losses. These industries now represent about five percent of the state's total employment, but account for more than 75 percent of net job losses since 2001.

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